

MA Paper Guidelines

Introduction:

Under the recent revision of the degree, all master's students are required to take HIST 552: Seminar in Historical Research. As a standard part of this course, students produce a substantial research paper. The resulting paper for the MA student will replace the comprehensive exams and will be reviewed by a committee of three faculty members: the instructor of HIST 552, the MA student's advisor, and one additional faculty member in the student's area of concentration, to be selected by the Director of Graduate Studies. This committee will determine whether the student passes the "seminar paper" milestone. The research paper will present a historical analysis of an issue in the student's major field of study and be based on primary and secondary sources. The evaluation will assess the student's ability to: 1) clearly articulate a research question and thesis statement; 2) effectively use primary and secondary sources; 3) analyze and contextualize primary sources; 4) maintain a logical structure and organization; and 5) write in a clear and concise manner suitable for academic work. The MA student is encouraged to regularly consult with their major advisor(s) during the writing process in HIST 552.

Learning objectives and goals:

1. Draft a scholarly article or dissertation chapter of publishable quality. The length of the paper should be ca. 8,000-10,000 words, including footnotes (double-spaced; 12pt font).
2. Demonstrate deep understanding of a specific historical topic through analysis of primary and secondary sources.
3. Make an original contribution to the existing historiography.
4. Implement feedback from the instructor of HIST 552 and the student's advisor(s) to revise and improve the final paper.
5. Adhere to the professional and ethical guidelines of the discipline, and to the standards of the UIC community.

MA Paper Rubric:

NOTE: Only papers that receive an overall grade of A (Excellent) or B (Good) qualify for fulfilling the MA paper requirement.

The final grade for HIST 552 may or may not be the same as the MA paper grade.

Research Question and Thesis Statement (20 points)

- **Excellent (16-20):** Clearly articulated and focused research question. Thesis statement is original, specific, and serves as a solid foundation for the study.

Arguments are thoroughly developed through the paper. The discussion of relevant historiography and the paper's historiographical contributions are clearly articulated.

- **Good (11-15):** Research question is clear. Arguments are well developed but may lack originality, depth, or specificity.
- **Adequate (6-10):** Research question is unclear. Thesis statement exists but lacks clarity, originality, or focus. Arguments are developed but lack depth.
- **Inadequate (0-5):** Research question is unclear or missing. Thesis statement is too broad, off-topic, or absent.

Research and Analysis (40 points)

- **Excellent (31-40 points):** Extensive research with a wide range of relevant sources. Seamless integration of primary and secondary sources. Critical analysis and interpretation are evident. Methods clearly defined, appropriate, and consistently applied. Analysis demonstrates exceptional critical thinking and understanding of the historical context.
- **Good (21-30 points):** Good research breadth with relevant sources. Some depth in analysis but may rely too heavily on secondary sources. Methods are clear and mostly applied consistently. Shows understanding of the historical context.
- **Adequate (11-20 points):** Limited use of sources. Uneven integration of sources with limited analysis. Methods are somewhat unclear or inconsistently applied.
- **Inadequate (0-10 points):** Insufficient research. Neglects essential sources. Lacks critical analysis or interpretation. Methods are inappropriate or missing.

Structure of Argument and Organization (20 points)

- **Excellent (16-20 points):** Logically organized with smooth transitions. Each section builds upon the previous, leading to a cohesive argument.
- **Good (11-15 points):** Generally well-organized with occasional lapses in flow or clarity.
- **Adequate (6-10 points):** Organization is unclear in parts. Sections may be disconnected or out of place.
- **Inadequate (0-5 points):** Lacks a coherent structure. Difficult to follow. Weak or no transitions.

Writing Style, Presentation, and Mechanics (15 points)

- **Excellent (12-15 points):** Writing is clear, concise, engaging, and free of errors. Professional presentation consistently maintained.
- **Good (8-11 points):** Few errors in grammar or style. Good presentation.
- **Adequate (4-7 points):** Writing is understandable but may have errors. Adequate clarity, presentation, and academic tone.
- **Inadequate (0-3 points):** Writing is difficult to follow. Frequent errors hinder comprehension.

Conclusion and Implications (5 points)

- **Excellent (5 points):** Conclusion effectively summarizes research and offers original insights. Future implications or avenues of research are suggested.
- **Good (4 points):** Conclusion summarizes research but lacks depth or original insight. Some mention of implications.
- **Adequate (3 points):** Conclusion is present but lacks clarity or connection to the research.
- **Inadequate (0-2 points):** Conclusion is vague, off topic, or missing.